

Message Text

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ACTION EUR-25

INFO OCT-01 ARA-16 ISO-00 EURE-00 CIAE-00 DODE-00 PM-07

H-03 INR-10 L-03 NSAE-00 NSC-07 PA-04 RSC-01 PRS-01

SP-03 SS-20 USIA-15 DRC-01 /117 W

----- 087949

P R 301525Z MAY 74

FM AMEMBASSY THE HAGUE

TO SECSTATE WASHDC PRIORITY 3677

INFO AMEMBASSY BRUSSELS

AMCONSUL CURACAO

AMEMBASSY LUXEMBOURG

AMCONSUL PARAMARIBO

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E.O. 11652: N/A

TAGS: PINT, NL

SUBJECT: 1974 MUNICIPAL ELECTIONS

REF: THE HAGUE 1585

1. SUMMARY: IN NATIONWIDE MUNICIPAL ELECTIONS MAY 29, NEW CHRISTIAN DEMOCRATIC APPEAL (CDA -- COMBINATION OF KVP, ARP, AND CHU) TURNED IN SURPRISINGLY STRONG PERFORMANCE. LABOR AND LIBERALS MADE MAJOR GAINS CONTRASTED WITH 1970 MUNICIPAL ELECTION PERFORMANCE BUT FELL SOMEWHAT SHORT OF SHOWING IN MARCH PROVINCIAL ELECTIONS. RADICALS (PPR) SUFFERED SETBACK, DS'70 CONTINUES TO DECLINE. THOUGH LOCAL ISSUES DOMINATED MOST CONTESTS, MUNICIPAL ELECTIONS HAVE NATIONAL SIGNIFICANCE. THEIR MOST IMPORTANT IMPACT WILL BE TO STRENGTHEN SELF-CONFIDENCE OF CHRISTIAN DEMOCRATIC PARTIES PARTICIPATING IN CABINET. LABOR'S PLANS TO FORM EXCLUSIVELY LEFT WING MUNICIPAL ADMINISTRATIONS IN SEVERAL MAJOR DUTCH CITIES WILL MOST CERTAINLY CAUSE LABOR-CDA DISSENSION ON THE LOCAL LEVEL WHICH COULD IN TURN AFFECT ADVERSELY COALITION

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COOPERATION. END SUMMARY.

2. ON MAY 29, ELECTIONS FOR MUNICIPAL CITY COUNCILS WERE HELD IN ALL DUTCH MUNICIPALITIES. VOTER TURN-OUT WAS 64.1 PERCENT OF THOSE ELIGIBLE TO VOTE, A SLIGHT INCREASE FROM LAST MUNICIPAL ELECTIONS IN 1970 BUT ALMOST A 10 PERCENT DECLINE FROM VOTER TURN-OUT IN THE MARCH PROVINCIAL ELECTIONS (REFTEL). CHRISTIAN DEMOCRATIC APPEAL OR CDA, A COMBINATION OF THREE CONFESSIONAL PARTIES (CATHOLIC PEOPLE'S, (KVP) ANTI-REVOLUTIONARY (ARP) AND CHRISTIAN HISTORICAL UNION (CHU)) GARNERED 23.2 PERCENT OF THE VOTE, AN INCREASE OF 2.9 PERCENT FROM THE MARCH 1974 PROVINCIAL ELECTIONS. LABOR PARTY GAINED 28.4 PERCENT OF THE VOTES, AN INCREASE OF 5.9 PERCENT OVER 1970 BUT A DECLINE OF 1.5 PERCENT FROM LABOR SHOWING IN MARCH. LIBERALS (VVD) CAPTURED 18.2 PERCENT OF THE VOTES, A SLIGHT DECLINE FROM THE 19.1 PERCENT IT GARNERED IN MARCH 1974 BUT STILL A SIGNIFICANT INCREASE FROM THE 13.6 PERCENT GAINED IN THE 1970 MUNICIPAL CONTEST. D'66 MADE A SLIGHT GAIN FROM THE DISASTROUS MARCH SHOWING (.8 PERCENT AS OPPOSED TO .6 PERCENT) BUT D'S'70 CONTINUED TO DECLINE (1.5 PERCENT IN MARCH TO 1.2 PERCENT YESTERDAY). THE COMMUNIST PARTY (CPN) SUFFERED A SLIGHT LOSS FROM ITS MARCH SHOWING. THE RADICALS (PPR) GAINED 3.5 PERCENT BUT HAD SCORED 4.1 PERCENT IN MARCH.

3. ISSUES. AS IN MOST MUNICIPAL ELECTIONS, LOCAL ISSUES WERE PARAMOUNT. THE ALMOST 10 PERCENT DECLINE IN VOTER TURN-OUT FROM MARCH PROVINCIAL ELECTIONS (TRADITIONALLY A REFERENDUM ON THE NATIONAL GOVERNMENT) SUGGESTS VOTERS WERE NOT PRIMARILY CONCERNED WITH REGISTERING APPROVAL OR DISAPPROVAL OF DEN UYL COALITION. IN SEVERAL MAJOR CITIES PRINCIPAL ISSUE WAS WHETHER NEW MUNICIPAL ADMINISTRATION WOULD INCLUDE A CROSS SECTION OF PARTIES REPRESENTED IN THE MUNICIPAL COUNCIL OR WOULD BE COMPOSED SOLELY OF ADHERENTS OF LEFT WING MAJORITY IN THE COUNCIL. THIS WAS THE MAIN ISSUE IN ROTTERDAM, GRONINGEN AND TO SOME EXTENT AMSTERDAM. LABOR PARTY AND ITS VARIOUS ALLIES (PPR, D'66, PSP AND PERHAPS CPN) NOW HAS ABSOLUTE MAJORITY IN CITY COUNCILS OF ROTTERDAM, AMSTERDAM, GRONINGEN AND LEIDEN. THUS IT CAN IF IT WISHES ENSURE THAT ALL WETHOUDERS LIMITED OFFICIAL USE

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(ALDERMEN) IN CITY GOVERNMENT WILL REPRESENT LABOR. LIBERAL FLOOR LEADER HANS WIEGEL HAS POINTED OUT THAT IF LABOR PLAYS THIS GAME IN BIG CITIES THE CDA AND VVD CAN PLAY SIMILAR GAME IN SMALLER COMMUNITIES. AN ESTIMATED 65 PERCENT OF MUNICIPAL COUNCILS WOULD HAVE MAJORITY COMBINATION OF VVD AND CDA AND COULD EXCLUDE LEFT WING FROM PARTICIPATION IN MUNICIPAL ADMINISTRATION.

4. REACTION TO RESULTS. PRIME MINISTER DEN UYL, WHO OPPOSES EFFORTS TO FORM AN EXCLUSIVELY LEFT WING ADMINISTRATION IN ROTTERDAM, DECLARED ON ELECTION NIGHT THAT SINCE ELECTIONS HAD PURELY LOCAL SIGNIFICANCE HE WOULD NOT COMMENT EXCEPT TO DEPLORE POOR VOTER TURN-OUT. ARP FLOOR LEADER ANTJES CLAIMED THE MUNICIPAL VOTE HAD NATIONAL SIGNIFICANCE AND SHOULD PUT LABOR-LED COALITION ON NOTICE THAT IT MUST PAY MORE ATTENTION TO THE MODERATE VIEWS OF THE CHRISTIAN DEMOCRATIC PARTICIPANTS OF KVP AND ARP. LIBERAL FLOOR LEADER WIEGEL DECLARED LABOR AND LIBERAL VICTORIES INDICATE POLARIZATION TENDENCY IN NETHERLANDS CONTINUES BUT CDA'S SHOWING SUGGESTS TENDENCY MAY BE LOSING SOME MOMENTUM. KVP LEADER ANDRIESEN EXPRESSED SATISFACTION WITH ELECTION RESULTS BUT UNLIKE AANTJES WAS SOMEWHAT RELUCTANT TO DRAW TOO MUCH NATIONAL SIGNIFICANCE FROM THEM. CHU FLOOR LEADER KRUISINGA WAS ENTHUSIASTIC ABOUT CDA SHOWING (AS WELL AS THAT OF CHU WHERE IT RAN ALONE). HE CLAIMED THIS PROVED CORRECTNESS OF HIS PARTY'S NON-PARTICIPATION IN THE COALITION.

6. COMMENT: WHILE MUNICIPAL ELECTIONS FOCUS PRIMARILY ON LOCAL ISSUES, THE 1974 ELECTIONS CERTAINLY HAVE NATIONAL IMPACT. MOST NOTABLE RESULT APPEARS TO BE RELATIVELY STRONG SHOWING OF CDA. THIS MIGHT ENCOURAGE KVP AND ARP TO TAKE STRONGER LINE WITHIN CABINET ON CONTROVERSIAL ISSUES SUCH AS DEFENSE EXPENDITURES AND LAND POLICY. KVP AND ARP WILL NO LONGER HAVE INORDINATE FEAR OF NEW ELECTIONS THEY HAD IMMEDIATELY AFTER NOVEMBER 1972 DEBACLE. CONVERSELY LABOR, THE DOMINANT PARTY IN THE COALITION, WILL HAVE TO TAKE THIS INCREASED CHRISTIAN DEMOCRATIC CONFIDENCE INTO ACCOUNT AND ACT ACCORDINGLY. CDA PERFORMANCE, MOREOVER, COULD CREATE TENSIONS WITHIN THREE CHRISTIAN DEMOCRATIC PARTIES BETWEEN LIMITED OFFICIAL USE

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THOSE FAVORING COOPERATION WITH LABOR IN THE CURRENT COALITION AND THOSE WHO ARE WILLING TO PUT THEIR MONEY ON THE CDA AND PRESUMABLY EVENTUAL CDA-LIBERAL COOPERATION. IN ADDITION, CDA SHOWING AND VVD'S SLIGHT DECLINE (CONTRASTED WITH MARCH) SUGGESTS CHRISTIAN DEMOCRATS MIGHT LOSE FEAR THAT STRONG VVD WOULD BE PRINCIPAL PARTNER IN ANY NEW CDA-LIBERAL COALITION. IF LEFT WING PARTIES GO THROUGH WITH PLANS TO FORM EXCLUSIVELY LEFT WING MUNICIPAL ADMINISTRATIONS IN MAJOR DUTCH CITIES, PRESSURES FROM LOCAL CDA POLITICIANS ON NATIONAL LEADERSHIP LEVEL COOPERATING WITH LABOR COULD INCREASE SIGNIFICANTLY. THIS OBVIOUSLY WOULD AFFECT STABILITY OF COALITION AND ITS INTERNAL COHERENCE.

7. ON LEFT WING SIDE, ELECTION RESULTS COULD STRENGTHEN

MODERATES IN LABOR PARTY. THE DISMAL SHOWING OF D'66 AND
POOR SHOWING OF THE PPR MAKE IT CLEARER THAN EVER THAT
THE LABOR PARTY, DESPITE ALL OF ITS SUCCESSES, CANNOT RULE
WITHOUT COOPERATION WITH THE CHRISTIAN DEMOCRATIC MIDDLE.
LABOR PARTY'S PRINCIPAL PROBLEM, HOWEVER, HAS ALWAYS BEEN
THAT YOUNGER AND MORE RADICAL MEMBERS REFUSE TO ACCEPT
THIS FACT OF DUTCH POLITICAL LIFE. LABOR,
UNLIKE THE CDA, DOES NOT HAVE THE LUXURY OF CHOICE IN
DECIDING WITH WHOM IT CAN RULE NATIONALLY. THIS STILL
REMAINS PARAMOUNT POLITICAL FACT IN THE NETHERLANDS AND
MUNICIPAL ELECTIONS OF 1974 HAVE UNDERSCORED IT ONCE
AGAIN.
TANGUY

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Message Attributes

Automatic Decaptioning: X
Capture Date: 01 JAN 1994
Channel Indicators: n/a
Current Classification: UNCLASSIFIED
Concepts: ELECTION RESULTS, PROVINCIAL ELECTIONS, POLITICAL PARTIES
Control Number: n/a
Copy: SINGLE
Draft Date: 30 MAY 1974
Decaption Date: 01 JAN 1960
Decaption Note:
Disposition Action: RELEASED
Disposition Approved on Date:
Disposition Authority: golinofr
Disposition Case Number: n/a
Disposition Comment: 25 YEAR REVIEW
Disposition Date: 28 MAY 2004
Disposition Event:
Disposition History: n/a
Disposition Reason:
Disposition Remarks:
Document Number: 1974THEHA02706
Document Source: CORE
Document Unique ID: 00
Drafter: n/a
Enclosure: n/a
Executive Order: N/A
Errors: N/A
Film Number: D740136-0417
From: THE HAGUE
Handling Restrictions: n/a
Image Path:
ISecure: 1
Legacy Key: link1974/newtext/t1974055/aaaaaejg.tel
Line Count: 182
Locator: TEXT ON-LINE, ON MICROFILM
Office: ACTION EUR
Original Classification: LIMITED OFFICIAL USE
Original Handling Restrictions: n/a
Original Previous Classification: n/a
Original Previous Handling Restrictions: n/a
Page Count: 4
Previous Channel Indicators:
Previous Classification: LIMITED OFFICIAL USE
Previous Handling Restrictions: n/a
Reference: THE HAGUE 1585
Review Action: RELEASED, APPROVED
Review Authority: golinofr
Review Comment: n/a
Review Content Flags:
Review Date: 05 APR 2002
Review Event:
Review Exemptions: n/a
Review History: RELEASED <05 APR 2002 by cunninfx>; APPROVED <13 JUN 2002 by golinofr>
Review Markings:

Declassified/Released
US Department of State
EO Systematic Review
30 JUN 2005

Review Media Identifier:
Review Referrals: n/a
Review Release Date: n/a
Review Release Event: n/a
Review Transfer Date:
Review Withdrawn Fields: n/a
Secure: OPEN
Status: NATIVE
Subject: 1974 MUNICIPAL ELECTIONS
TAGS: PINT, NL, CDA
To: STATE
Type: TE
Markings: Declassified/Released US Department of State EO Systematic Review 30 JUN 2005